



4.3 The Meeting proposed the following modifications to the ToR to be proposed to State and Conservation 4-2015:

- i. ToR A – propose to soften the expression ‘develop common guidelines’ to ‘support the development of common guidelines’, this proposal is considered relevant due to the national working procedures in monitoring development and the fact that the main purpose of the network is to allow information exchange,
- ii. ToR A point 5 – clarify that the monitoring guidelines should also consider the monitoring needs for the WFD, noting that in some Contracting Parties there are separate national expert groups working with the WFD and the MSFD and it is important to ensure engagement of the correct experts, and this is timely as the WFD monitoring is under revision,
- iii. ToR C and D – clarifying the wording to ensure that the ToR are clearly understood as a mandate given to this network to support the delivery of the indicator evaluations and the timelines of this task, noting that ‘support’ can be given by the network when asked to provide this support.

4.4 The Meeting recalled that at first the network was established to continue work on benthic habitat monitoring as a continuation of the HELCOM BALSAM project, and that consecutive tasks of a slightly broader scope have now been proposed in the Terms of Reference.

4.5 The Meeting highlighted the need to ensure that the network includes nominated experts from all Contracting Parties that allow for the work to cover the various issues listed in the ToR.

4.6 The Meeting concluded that the meaning of ‘benthic habitat monitoring’ in the context of MSFD deals with both the distribution, extent and the quality of habitats and that these aspects therefore are relevant for the network to discuss and consider.

#### **Agenda Item 5 Information relevant to the activities of the Intersessional Network on Benthic habitat monitoring**

Documents: 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4

5.1 The Meeting took note of the information on the current timeline of the HOLAS II project (document 5-1) and the supporting projects of HELCOM BalticBOOST and HELCOM TAPAS (document 5-4) as presented by the HELCOM Secretariat.

5.2 The Meeting noted in particular the timeline of indicator evaluation deliveries in the HOLAS II timeline in early 2017 of evaluations including data for the period 2011-2015 and the update in early 2018 including data updates as needed for the period 2011-2016.

5.3 The Meeting noted that the network is also expected to support the development of data-arrangements needed for the assessment.

5.4 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the ‘Workshop on benthic habitat survey and monitoring methods’ held at the final conference of the Marmoni project (document 5-2) as presented by Estonia, noting that the workshop was a short meeting used to collate information and specify open questions to be tackled by the HELCOM intersessional network on benthic habitat monitoring.

5.5 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the ‘Workshop on marine biotope mapping for conservation purposes’ held in late 2015 (document 5-3) as presented by Estonia, noting that the workshop was considered helpful in illuminating different understanding of terminology by biologists and geologists.

## Agenda Item 6 Monitoring

### Working programme of the Intersessional Network on Benthic Habitat

6.1 The Meeting discussed the working programme of the network and allocated lead responsibility and timeline for the tasks needed to be carried out to accomplish the ToR (Annex 2).

6.2 The Meeting agreed to look for the possibility to have one physical meeting annually, and was of the opinion that the beginning of the year is a suitable timing (end of February beginning of March), and welcomed the offer by Germany to host the next meeting.

6.3 The Meeting concluded that there is a need to set up at least one skype meeting in the autumn 2016 and agreed to come back to determine a suitable date.

## Agenda Item 7

### TOR 1 - Develop proposal for harmonization of methods and develop joint HELCOM guidelines for monitoring of benthic biotopes, based on the work to develop the HELCOM pre-core indicator on the distribution, extent and patterns of benthic biotopes

Documents: 7-1

*A summary of existing and planned national benthic habitat monitoring, methods, programmes and projects*

7.1 The Meeting discussed national monitoring with the aim of producing a summary of existing and planned national benthic habitat monitoring, methods, programmes and projects,

- Germany presented monitoring in coastal and open sea areas under the WFD, HD and MSFD frameworks (Presentation 1), especially clarifying that standardized monitoring methods are only available for geological survey and mapping, while for biological habitat components there are no fixed mapping standards and significant differences in monitoring techniques between the different frameworks.

Germany further informed on the intention to apply the national rapid assessment survey method in ports to monitor benthic non-indigenous species, in combination with a method using plates placed at three different depths. Germany informed on a project where side scan sonar images of stones will be 'ground truthed' by divers by studying if stable rocks with algae provide a different signal than stones that are not stable. In another project the first fine scale survey of stone reefs under the HD context were produced in 2014/15. Connected to this project the divers identified three locations where vegetation depth limit can be determined, although generally depth limit cannot be determined as the limiting factor is substrate availability. Germany clarified that predominant habitats are monitored in the MSFD context, however e.g. the nationally protected 'coarse sand and gravel' are currently not monitored as the occurrence is restricted, not fully mapped and generally within the Natura2000 habitat areas monitored under the HD context. Currently the expert proposal is under consideration by the management level not to perform monitoring in the Darss sill as the communities are so heavily influenced by the naturally varying salinity conditions, and thus any anthropogenic changes are detectable. For the habitats no extent and distribution monitoring is done, only desktop studies evaluating whether construction or similar activities reduce the area.

Germany also presented information about geological mapping (Presentation 2) for which the main responsibility lies with BSH and BfN in close cooperation with federal states, noting that common technical guidelines for using side scan sonar mainly in the offshore approach has been developed.

- Sweden presented biotope monitoring and mapping (Presentation 3). Noting that vegetation monitoring is not done with fixed sampling size and thus changes in species richness can currently not be reliably calculated from the data. Sweden further clarified that several monitoring programmes are under review and revision, with the possible outcome of currently applied monitoring methods might change soon. Highlighting that the geological substrate mapping does currently not provide information on a sufficiently fine grained scale to provide a basis for biological modelling, for this reason the mapping is currently focussing on providing HUB level 5&6 biotopes as

the substrate information is not available. Further noting that the design of the mapping activities should be guided by the agreements on which biotopes are to be used in assessments (e.g. indicators) and which are considered to be of high importance for conservation.

- Finland presented habitat mapping carried out through the VELMU project (Presentation 4) and demonstrated the [VELMU map portal](#) informing that currently the information is available only in Finnish however by the end of the year information will be available in English, and the next update for additional data is planned for next spring. Based on the produced data a new three year period has recently been initiated to evaluate the Natura2000 habitat extent and explore methods for estimating the quality.  
Finland also presented regular benthic monitoring (Presentation 5), noting that the new national programme agreed on in 2015 does not include benthic habitat monitoring only traditional benthic monitoring.
- Lithuania presented national benthic monitoring (Presentation 6).
- Poland informed that benthic habitats have been officially mapped in only three areas officially and the results were published in 2009. In addition to these areas the Maritime Institute has several areas with maps, however the data stems from private projects so the data is not openly accessible and thus cannot be used in assessments. The Maritime Institute is involved in a large pilot project of monitoring of marine habitats, focussing on five Natura2000 habitats developing methods, inventories and assessment methods for MSFD and HD context. A report will be prepared for the European Commission in 2018. Regular monitoring is carried out annually by the Institute of Meteorology and Water Management according to HELCOM COMBINE for zoobenthos and phytobenthos. Monitoring for the aims of WFD is carried out by Regional Inspectorates for Environmental Protection.
- Latvia informed on monitoring stations in Gulf of Riga, once per year 20 stations are sampled using Van Veen, 0.5 mesh size, formaldehyde for conservation for macrozoobenthos and wet weight is calculates. In the Baltic Proper 12 points are sampled for macrozoobenthos in the coastal zone. No open sea monitoring is carried out due to financial restraints. Hard-substrate data have been collected through EU Life projects such as Marmoni and some state funded projects. Criteria for the quality of reefs still need to be developed, and no studies on the topic have so far been completed. For monitoring drop video is mainly used. The currently available data is considered to provide preliminary information on what benthic habitats occur. Monitoring plans have been developed, however the funding is not clear the final scope of the monitoring programme is not decided.
- Estonia presented benthic habitat mapping (Presentation 7). Currently, approximately one third of the sea area has been mapped, and classifying the area according to HELCOM HUB is underway. Estonia also presented the NEMA project for mapping additional areas inside conservation areas and unmapped areas in the EEZ where conservation values were presumed to exist (Presentation 8). Another main activity of the project is to define FCS criteria for HD Annex 1 habitats.

7.2 The Meeting discussed the criteria for defining the Natura2000 habitats (HD Annex 1 habitat types), and concluded that often the criteria have been defined long ago and as data availability has improved there are now ongoing discussions to review and possibly revise the criteria in some Contracting Parties.

7.3 The Meeting discussed the aim of developing harmonized benthic habitat monitoring methods, recognizing that applying different methods in different areas can be relevant, and that an overview of current activities and methods used can support Contracting Parties currently developing monitoring methods.

7.4 The Meeting concluded that there is no experience in mapping and assessing areal aspects of benthic habitats and that this overall is a new topic for the HELCOM community, and noting that there is a need to clarify in general that taking one grab sample in a biotope is not mapping and monitoring of a habitat extent.

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*Workplan on how to achieve harmonization of habitat monitoring methods in the Baltic Sea*

7.5 The Meeting concluded that further work is needed to come up with a baseline, and only once this type-method has been agreed it will become relevant to propose steps for harmonizing methods between Contracting Parties, thus this is currently not a timely activity for the network.

7.6 The Meeting was of the opinion that the expert network needs input from experts in geological mapping to ensure that the mapping and monitoring proposals meet all requirements.

*Review and comparison of monitoring needs for different relevant policies*

7.7 The Meeting took note of the presentation on monitoring requirements by Estonia (Presentation 9).

7.8 The Meeting concluded that it would be appropriate to explore if some compilations on the topic have been made in any other projects, noting that e.g. the Marmoni project report 'Biodiversity related requirements of the MSFD' is not focused on benthic habitats and not on what the actual monitoring requirements are although some relevant information is included.

7.9 The Meeting agreed that Estonia will lead the activity by detailing the elements of information that are needed after which the structure will be circulated between May and September 2016, aiming at reporting first findings to State and Conservation 5-2016.

*Update of the HELCOM BALSAM project catalogue of monitoring and survey methods*

7.10 The Meeting took note of the presentation of the aims of BALSAM WP6 by Estonia (Presentation 10).

7.11 The Meeting recalled that the further development of the guidelines developed in BALSAM relates to the ongoing revision of the HELCOM monitoring guidelines carried out under State and Conservation working group, with the aim to include the guidelines in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual linked to the [Topic: Seabed habitat distribution and extent](#).

7.12 The Meeting was of the opinion that in order to agree on monitoring guidelines there has to be an understanding of the assessment requirements to ensure that suitable and sufficient data are provided by the monitoring activities, noting that for the MSFD context assessment is required for habitat distribution, extent and quality, and it was noted that some Contracting Parties of HELCOM also being EU Member States have pointed out that the issue should be clarified through the review and revision of the Commission Decision (2010/477/EU).

7.13 The Meeting noted that under the MSFD there are current proposals of reporting assessments on EUNIS Level 2 'predominant habitats' which requires assessments based on lower level habitat types for which data and indicators are available e.g. on HUB Level 4-6.

7.14 The Meeting clarified that the BALSAM guidelines need to be specified to clarify for which specific habitats the guidelines are applicable, and that in addition there might be a need to identify biotopes for which monitoring guidelines are lacking and are required in order to ensure relevant assessments can be made.

7.15 The Meeting noted the comment by Germany that currently no monitoring guidelines exist that would provide data that would allow to detect statistically relevant changes in extent and distribution on EUNIS Level 2 'predominant habitats' within the relevant assessment periods. The Meeting further noted that Germany designs its national monitoring system mainly relating to the detection of specific pressures affecting the status, so that the monitoring supports a designation or relevant measures.

7.16 The Meeting noted the comment by Sweden that monitoring status is considered relevant even in situations where all relevant pressures are not known and that this approach is considered to be in line with the MSFD requirements.

7.17 The Meeting noted the information by Finland that monitoring method guidelines from the VELMU project will soon be published and could be relevant for the further development of common guidelines.

7.18 The meeting discussed the different interpretation between Contracting Parties on distribution, extent and quality, and considered as an example a case where a reef is fully covered with fauna and when revisited the reef is found to be only half covered, noting that this change could be interpreted as a 50% decline in quality of the reef or as a 50% decline of extent of the biotope defined by the community.

7.19 The Meeting agreed that Sweden will lead the activity of completing a synthesis and thus finalizing the monitoring guidelines, taking already submitted comments from Germany into consideration, collect comments from Finland, Poland and Lithuania that were not participating in the BALSAM project and clarify for which habitats the guidelines are applicable in a general preamble.

7.20 The Meeting agreed that Estonia will lead on the activity of circulating the BALSAM catalogue for comments by September, with the aim of reporting the final result to State and Conservation 5-2016.

## **Agenda Item 8 TOR 2 Support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM core and pre-core indicators on benthic communities and habitats**

8.1 The Meeting took note of the information on HOLAS II and core indicator continued development presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (Presentation 11), noting that the role of the intersessional network is to review the indicator development during 2016 and to ensure timely delivery of the indicator evaluations to HOLAS II, and further noting the currently agreed Lead Countries and indicative tasks for each indicator.

8.2 The Meeting took note of the information of demands on the biodiversity assessment tool developed in BalticBOOST WP 1.1 based on the core indicators presented by Finland (Presentation 12).

8.3 The Meeting took note of information on the indicator testing framework developed in the DEVOTES project as presented by Finland (Presentation 13).

### *Population structure of long-lived macrozoobenthic species*

8.4 The Meeting took note of the current stage of development informed by Co-Lead Country Germany, that various information have been collected during CORESET II and currently no other data is known.

8.5 The Meeting discussed the definition of 'long-lived' and concluded that no strict definition has been made, and recalled that bivalves have been considered relevant and that for each area the most long-lived and appropriate species has been selected. Regarding blue mussels the Meeting recalled that no suitable data has been available as the current scattered data is only including very rough age classes and therefore the species has so far not been included.

8.6 The Meeting noted that the plan for the further development work on the indicator is currently mainly taken forward through national case studies, noting that Germany is continuing analyses of *Arctica islandica* size distribution data expected to be presented at summer, other development work is currently not going on for the indicator.

8.7 The Meeting discussed the relevance of the indicator, and considered that this indicator is relevant for future assessments. However, it was noted that monitoring data starting in 2011 is not readily available and it might not be possible to include this indicator evaluation in the HOLAS II. However it is considered relevant to develop for future assessment needs.

8.8 The Meeting concluded based on the information by the Co-Lead Countries that it seems unlikely that the indicator would be operational in time to be included in HOLAS II.

### *State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community*

8.9 The Meeting took note of the current stage of development informed by Co-Lead Country Germany, on the development and testing of the calculated sensitivity values during CORESET II.

8.10 The Meeting recalled that operationalizing this core indicator was considered to be a high priority by State and Conservation 2-2015, and took note of the view of the Co-Lead Countries that it is deemed possible to develop an operational concept by September 2016.

8.11 The Meeting discussed the problem that emerged from the calculated sensitivity values where the *Monoporeia affinis* values in the northernmost sub-basins the species is abundant although it is sensitive and that the naturally low diversity also adds to the misinterpretation of the status. The Meeting discussed if it would be appropriate to apply a different method compared to the index in the northernmost sub-basins, or to only use trend information on selected species and proposed that this should be considered when the indicator is developed further.

8.12 The Meeting considered the proposal to split the indicator into one open sea indicator and one coastal indicator, noting that in this case developing an indicator for the open sea assessment units would be sufficient.

8.13 The Meeting was of the opinion that it is important that Sweden is involved in the further development of the indicator.

8.14 The Meeting took note that Finland has a time series that can be used to set the GES boundary, however noting that there is a problem with calibrating the open sea assessment units and coastal assessment units. The Meeting took note of the plan of Germany sending the data to Finland to allow for testing the GES approach, with the aim to have GES boundaries proposed by September at the late for the open sea assessment units.

#### *Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes*

8.15 The Meeting recalled that operationalizing this core indicator was considered to be a high priority by State and Conservation 2-2015

8.16 The Meeting took note of the information by the Co-Lead Country Germany, clarifying that the main contact person as a Co-Lead Country representative is Torsten Berg.

8.17 The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden that AquaBiota has been requested to be involved in the development of the indicator and that the level of engagement will be further clarified.

#### *Distribution, pattern and extent of benthic biotopes*

8.18 The Meeting took note of the current stage of development as presented by the Lead Country Estonia, noting that activities have not yet started however there are plans to start the process very soon.

8.19 The Meeting took note of the information that when the HELCOM TAPAS project was drafted, one of the aims was that this indicator could also be further developed based on data coming in through the ecological-component data call and that resources in HELCOM TAPAS may provide support to testing the indicator approach.

8.20 The Meeting took note of the view of the Lead Country that it is currently not possible to evaluate whether the indicator will be developed by September.

#### *Lower depth limit distribution of the macrophyte community*

8.21 The Meeting took note of the presentation on the indicator concept by Co-Lead Country Estonia (Presentation 14).

8.22 The Meeting noted that some information exchange has been going on also after CORESET II, and that the aim is to finalize the list of reference condition values for each of the assessment unit scale 4 units as GES boundaries.

8.23 The Meeting took note of the information that there is a plan in place among the Co-Lead Countries on how to take the development forward.

8.24 The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden that AquaBiota has been requested to be involved in the development of the indicator and that the level of engagement will be further clarified.

*Biomass ratio of opportunistic and annual and perennial macroalgae*

8.25 The Meeting took note of the presentation on the indicator concept by the Lead Country Estonia (Presentation 15) noting that although this indicator is at a candidate-stage it has been proven to work well in Estonian national waters.

8.26 The Meeting took note of the information that the indicator concept has been developed further so that it could be possible to utilize coverage-data, and that one of the remaining open issue is the definitions of opportunistic species and annual/perennial lists.

8.27 The Meeting took note of the information by Poland that a lot of data is available through a national indicator based on a ratio of positive and negative macroalgae.

8.28 The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden that proportion of opportunistic or late successionalists have been tested as indicators within the Waters-project, but seem to respond to salinity rather than to eutrophication gradients. However, cumulative coverage to total coverage ratio was found to be a robust indicator in the national testing.

8.29 The Meeting took note of the information that the indicator is developed for the assessment unit scale 4.

8.30 The Meeting took note of the aim of the Lead country to test the indicator concept approach based on data collated from several Contracting Parties, with the aim to finalize the testing by June 2016 by which time it will be conclude whether the indicator works and whether it is relevant to continue the development.

*Coordination between the Lead Countries and the IN-benthic habitat monitoring*

8.31 The Meeting concluded that the Lead Countries are to ensure that new proposals for the indicators are circulated on the intersessional expert network on benthic biotope monitoring e-mailing lists, and that the network member are then to ensure that national comments are presented and discussed.

8.32 The Meeting concluded that it will be needed to set up a mandatory on-line meeting in autumn of 2016 to conclude on an expert level consensus for the core indicators in time to provide input to the indicator submissions to State and Conservation 5-2016.

**Agenda Item 9 TOR 3 Support in cooperation with Lead Countries and appointed experts the update of the core indicator reports and indicator evaluations on benthic communities and habitats by early 2017 and further update the report as relevant by early 2018, or as otherwise agreed in the HOLAS II project**

Documents: 9-1

9.1 The Meeting took note of the information on the current level of data availability in the COMBINE database for zoobenthos and phytobenthos data as well as the reporting format as presented by HELCOM Secretariat (document 9-1).

9.2 The Meeting was of the opinion that there should in principle be no problems with data format compatibility for the zoobenthos data as the methods and that data format have been stable for many years.

9.3 The Meeting was of the opinion that for phytobenthos data there may be problems in the data structure and reporting format, and invited the datahost ICES to compare the data format to monitoring data by contacting the relevant persons in the Contracting Parties in order to conclude on any incompatibilities in the format.

9.4 The Meeting discussed the fact that phytobenthos monitoring methods are still developing and that nationally it has been identified as a challenge that several methods are often used in combination e.g. both drop-video and dive transects, and further noted that nationally this issue has been solved so that only indicator values are reported into a single database as no data format has been developed that could hold all types of raw data.

9.5 The Meeting took note of the information that the biodiversity assessment system is developed to support the development of the integrated biodiversity assessment, and was of the opinion that it is important to ensure good communication between the Lead Country representatives and the experts developing the data portal (workspace) especially it will be important for the data portal developers to request information from the Lead Country representatives developing indicators not supported by data in COMBINE.

## **Agenda Item 10**

### **Any other business**

#### *Clarifying relevant terminology for benthic habitat mapping and monitoring*

10.1 The Meeting discussed the request from State and Conservation 2-2015 on clarifying the definition of 'landscape' and 'detailed landscape mapping'.

10.2 The Meeting recommends to use the terminology as defined in HELCOM HUB, and not to use the term 'landscape' as this is not a requirement in any legal framework, and noted that the term 'predominant habitat' in the MSFD context is defined as EUNIS Level 2 which corresponds to HELCOM HUB Level 3.

10.3 The Meeting recalled that the Habitat Directive Annex 1 habitat types, called 'biotope complexes' in HELCOM HUB, are comprised of a mixture of entities defined based on geomorphological features and functional features.

10.4 The Meeting identified for clarity that as both 'landscape' and 'habitat' are defined based on non-biological features the difference between these two terms is the currently open and confounding issue. The Meeting further concluded that the spatial scale is an important differentiating factor between 'habitat' and 'landscape', and that 'landscape' is often defined on a large scale for geological purposes whereas 'habitat' is defined on smaller scales linked to the scales of biological communities.

10.5 The Meeting recalled that HELCOM HUB Level 3 does not include salinity which was included in the 'landscape' definitions in the HELCOM BALANCE project, however concluded that as salinity categorization systems exist it is sufficient to combine such systems with HELCOM HUB when needed.

10.6 The Meeting concluded that mapping should as a minimum requirement be carried out on the scale of HELCOM HUB Level 3, however this is not considered to reflect a 'detailed mapping' level, and noted that details on the HELCOM HUB Level 6 where specific species communities are defined might be needed for some applications especially for soft substrates while HELCOM HUB Level 5 could be sufficient for hard substrates, and that these levels are considered to be 'detailed'.

## **Agenda Item 11**

### **Outcome of the Meeting**

Document: Outcome

11.1 The Meeting agreed on a one-day written procedure to adopt on the Outcome of the Meeting. The Outcome of the Meeting, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available on the [meeting site](#) in the HELCOM Meeting Portal.

## Annex 1. List of participants

Representing	Name	Organization	E-mail
<b>Chair</b>			
Chair	Georg Martin	Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu	<a href="mailto:georg.martin@ut.ee">georg.martin@ut.ee</a>
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## Annex 2. Workplan of the Intersessional Expert Network on Benthic Habitat Monitoring

**ToR 1.** Develop proposal for harmonization of methods and develop joint HELCOM guidelines for monitoring of benthic biotopes, based on the work to develop the HELCOM pre-core indicator on the distribution, extent and patterns of benthic biotopes, including to:

**Task 1.** A summary of existing and planned national benthic habitat monitoring, methods, programmes and projects,

Time: 02.2016 – 10.03.2016

Lead: Georg Martin

Description of the work: First draft of the list of projects and activities prepared by Chair. Draft is circulated among members of the group. List will be updated each time before S&C group meeting.

**Task 2.** A work plan on how to achieve harmonization of habitat monitoring methods in the Baltic Sea area,  
Time: 02.2016 – long term task, 2018

Lead: not decided

Description of the work: Chair will come up with the proposal of the roadmap by autumn and circulate the plan in the group. Decision will be taken in the group before the autumn S&C meeting.

**Task 3.** Review and comparison of monitoring needs for different relevant policies

Time: 02.2016 – first draft until S&C autumn 2016.

Lead: Georg Martin

Description of the work: Based on the information available from the preparatory work for the first meeting the information report will be elaborated and then discussed in the Group.

**Task 4.** An update of the BALSAM catalogue on monitoring and survey methods, by widening the expertise through participation from all Contracting Parties of HELCOM, and with the aim of feeding into the HELCOM Monitoring Manual

Time: 02.2016 – by autumn S&C 2016

Lead: Aquabiota

Description of the work: Comments from countries to AB before summer (ASAP).

**ToR 2.** Support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM core and pre-core indicators on benthic communities and habitats,

**Task 5.** Overview of the status of development of core and pre-core indicators related to the benthic habitats,

Time: 02.2016 – 09.2016

Lead: Georg Martin

Description of the work: Information on the status and plans for development of core indicators will be circulated to IN. Skype meeting will be held before S&C meeting 3 weeks in autumn 2016.

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**Task 6.** Support in the development of GES-boundaries for the indicators for which the GES-boundaries have not yet been adopted with the aim of adoption by the end of 2016 at the latest,

Time: Same as task 5

Lead: Same as task 5

Description of the work: Same as task 5

**Task 7.** Review the further development of pre-core indicators according to the prioritizations of State & Conservation 2-2015 and Gear 11-2015.

Time: Same as task 5

Lead: Same as task 5

Description of the work: Same as task 5

**Task 8.** Coordination of the work plan of the expert network with Lead countries on development of benthic related core, pre core- and candidate indicators harmonized with other HELCOM activities such as HELCOM Baltic BOOST and TAPAS project.

Time: Same as task 5

Lead: Same as task 5

Description of the work: Same as task 5

**ToR. 3.** Support in cooperation with Lead countries and appointed experts the update of the core indicator reports and indicator evaluations on benthic communities and habitats by early 2017 and further update the reports as relevant by early 2018, or as otherwise agreed in the HOLAS II project;

Time: 02.2016 – 04.2017

Lead: Secretariat

Description of the work: Communication between group and Secretariat and data managers (portals and ICES). Status of the work will be reported and discussed at Skype meeting before S&C meeting twice per year.